DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 125 270 FL 007 655

AUTHOR Tinsley, Royal L., Jr.
TITLE Translation as a Career Option for Foreign Language Majors. CAL-ERIC/CLL Series on Languages and Linguistics, No. 37.
INSTITUTION ERIC Clearinghouse on Languages and Linguistics, Arlington, Va.
PUB DATE May 76
NOTE 12p.
JOURNAL CIT Bulletin of the Association of Departments of Foreign Languages; v7 n4 May 1976

EDRS PRICE MF-$0.83 HC-$1.67 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Career Choice; *Career Opportunities; College Majors; Employment Potential; *Interpreters; Job Skills; Language Instruction; *Language Skills; Practical Arts; Professional Education; Professional Training; Second Language Learning; *Second Languages; *Translation

ABSTRACT

This booklet is intended to provide the college foreign language major with practical observations on translation and interpretation as possible professions. The skills and training required of competent translators are discussed, and their responsibilities, working conditions and approximate salary figures for various translating tasks are described. Translation as an art is also examined, as is its daily importance to all of us. (DB)

****
* Documents acquired by ERIC include many informal unpublished *
* materials not available from other sources. ERIC makes every effort *
* to obtain the best copy available. Nevertheless, items of marginal *
* reproducibility are often encountered and this affects the quality *
* of the microfiche and hardcopy reproductions ERIC makes available *
* via the ERIC Document Reproduction Service (EDRS). EDRS is not *
* responsible for the quality of the original document. Reproductions *
* supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made from the original. *
****

ED125270

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION & WELFARE
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION

THIS DOCUMENT HAS BEEN REPRODUCED EXACTLY AS RECEIVED FROM THE PERSON OR ORGANIZATION ORIGINATING IT. POINTS OF VIEW OR OPINIONS STATED DO NOT NECESSARILY REPRESENT OFFICIAL NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION POSITION OR POLICY

TRANSLATION AS A CAREER OPTION FOR FOREIGN LANGUAGE MAJORS

Royal L. Tinsley, Jr.

FL00 7655

CAL • ERIC/CLL Series on Languages and Linguistics, No. 37

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH,
EDUCATION & WELFARE
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF
EDUCATION

THIS DOCUMENT HAS BEEN REPRODUCED EXACTLY AS RECEIVED FROM THE PERSON OR ORGANIZATION ORIGINATING IT. POINTS OF VIEW OR OPINIONS STATED DO NOT NECESSARILY REPRESENT OFFICIAL NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION POSITION OR POLICY

The material in this publication was prepared pursuant to a contract with the National Institute of Education, U.S. Department of Health, Education, and Welfare. Contractors undertaking such projects under Government sponsorship are encouraged to express freely their judgment in professional and technical matters. Prior to publication, the manuscript was submitted to the Association of Departments of Foreign Languages for critical review and determination of professional competence. This publication has met such standards. Points of view or opinions, however, do not necessarily represent the official view or opinions of either the Association of Departments of Foreign Languages or the National Institute of Education.

Reprinted from the *Bulletin* of the Association of Departments of Foreign Languages, volume 7, number 4 (May 1976).

TRANSLATION AS A CAREER OPTION FOR FOREIGN LANGUAGE MAJORS*

Royal L. Tinsley, Jr.

IT is gratifying that concerted efforts are being made to discover, define, and publicize the practical aspects of studying foreign languages, despite the danger inherent in the American tendency to focus sharply on a single feature of a complex problem without sufficient consideration of other factors. Teachers of foreign languages have delayed far too long in turning at least a part of their attention to the fact that competence in two or more languages is a practical necessity in many vocations. Care must be taken, however, that while focusing on this practical side of language learning, there is no corresponding tendency to ignore the very real humanistic values of studying languages and literatures; for many students, the traditional values are justification enough for language study.

From a practical point of view, however, there is really only one alternative to teaching as a full-time occupation using applied foreign language skills: translation. No other activity is so closely and naturally related to the learning and teaching of foreign languages, yet too few FL teachers at any level know very much about translation as a vocation or have ever heard of the American Translators Association, the largest professional organization for translators in the United States.

The ATA was founded in 1959 and now has well over 1,200 members involved in every phase of translation. Some thirty colleges and universities in the U.S. and Canada are institutional members. Any individual may become a member, and anyone interested in knowing what is going on in the translating profession would be well advised to do so.

The subject of curriculum and methods for training translators is of interest to almost everyone involved in foreign language teaching. Teachers of languages, vocational guidance counselors, and others not involved in actual translator-training programs, however, are probably less interested in the specific training methods and curriculum than in the opportunities for employment, potential earning power, and possibilities for obtaining formal training for the profession.

In its broadest sense, as applied to language, translation is the act or process of expressing an idea, or message, in some *target language* other than the *source language* in which the translator receives it. It is this broadest sense of the word that is best known to the general public. Among professional translators, translation of spoken language is called "interpretation," and the term "translation" is applied primarily to the translation of written or printed texts. The distinction is a technical one, and professionals may often casually refer to translating a speech rather than interpreting it, primarily because of the subjective connotations of the term "interpret." The use of "interpret" is somewhat paradoxical in any case, since all translation strives for accuracy and relatively little interpreting—in the sense of "explaining"—is allowed.

The distinction is a useful one, nonetheless, because the two activities make use of quite different linguistic skills. Interpreters often translate written materials when they are not interpreting spoken language, either because their employer expects them to do so or, in the case of free-lance interpreters, because they need to earn money between interpreting assignments. The typical interpreter may very well be a dynamic, extroverted person, impatient with the painstaking detail required for translation; most prefer not to translate written texts when they can avoid it. Translators, on the other hand, often have little facility with the spoken language since their work does not require oral fluency, and they may be happier working in a room alone than performing before an audience. Translators consequently tend to avoid acting as interpreters, although many salaried translators are required to interpret telephone conversations and, of course, to act as escort interpreters for foreign visitors. Some people function equally well in both areas.[1]

Although there have been translators and interpreters almost since the beginning of time,

*This article is adapted from an address to the Joint Conference on Foreign Languages and Career Opportunities at the University of Cincinnati, 11 October 1975, sponsored by the Ohio Chapter of the American Association of Teachers of German, the German Department of the University of Cincinnati, and the Goethe House of New York. The author is Professor of German at the University of Arizona and President of the American Translators Association.

and although the position of court interpreter was often a hereditary sinecure in ancient cultures, the "professional" translator and interpreter is a relatively recent phenomenon. The modern conference interpreter first appeared as a professional during the negotiations ending World War I, and the simultaneous interpreter was created out of the special problems posed by the Nuremberg War Crimes Trials that began in 1945. The history of translation and interpretation is a fascinating story in itself.[2]

There are at present some 1,500 simultaneous conference interpreters worldwide.[3] A large number of them are permanent staff interpreters for national and international organizations such as the U.S. Department of State, the European Economic Community, the World Bank, the Organization of American States, the United Nations, and many others. Many, if not most, are free-lance interpreters who supplement organizational staffs or who work for independent international conferences of scientists, engineers, and various other occupational or special-interest groups.

Escort interpreters working for the State Department are paid $75 to $80 per day, plus expenses, to accompany visiting foreign nationals. Simultaneous interpreters at the United Nations earn $25,000 to $30,000 per annum, and the U.N. rate for free-lance conference interpreters working in the Americas is $154.15 per day, plus per diem and first-class travel accommodations. Rates and working conditions for interpreters are rather strictly regulated by their professional associations.[4]

A free-lance interpreter must work approximately 75 days per year to make ends meet, and fairly steady employment is necessary to maintain professional competence. Many interpreters read six or eight newspapers every day in three languages in order to be familiar with current events and with the names and titles of people likely to be mentioned in delegates' speeches. Ideally, interpreters are furnished with advance copies of speeches so that they may prepare themselves, but many times they are hearing the material for the first time. Most interpreters work 100 to 150 days per year; more than 250 days of work per year may bring an interpreter to the brink of a nervous breakdown (cf. Longley).

Most of the current generation of interpreters have been trained at one of the twenty-five or thirty training centers in Europe. Canada now has some eight centers for training translators and interpreters. In the U.S., T&I training has been available since 1959 at Georgetown University, and in 1967 a Department of T&I was established at the Monterey Institute of Foreign Studies for training in translating and interpreting French, German, Spanish, Russian, and Chinese. Stanford University initiated a T&I program in the Department of German Studies in 1971, and this was later extended to the Department of Slavic Studies. Carnegie-Mellon University in Pittsburgh now offers T&I training in most European languages and in Arabic, and the University of California at Santa Barbara has recently begun programs in German and French. The Monterey and Santa Barbara programs are graduate-level and award a certificate in translating or interpreting. The University of Puerto Rico at San Juan grants the M.A., and all Canadian programs award either the B.A., B.S., or M.A. in translating and interpreting. In most programs trainees receive identical training in the initial phases, with specialization in translation or interpretation—depending on abilities and preferences—reserved for the later stages of training.[5]

Admission to a training program for interpreters usually requires near-native fluency in one foreign language and good command of a second. It is all but impossible to become a competent interpreter without one or more years of residence in countries where the languages of competence are spoken. Interpreters normally are required to interpret only into their language of habitual use, but they must be able to interpret into one other language, if necessary, and to interpret *from* a third. Every U.N. interpreter must have native fluency in one of the official U.N. languages and be able to interpret from two others; one of these three must be French.

It is obvious that the market for interpreters, and especially for permanently employed conference interpreters, is very limited, and the competition is formidable. Only a person who is virtually bilingual, with considerable fluency in a third language, has much chance. For those who qualify, however, it is an exciting, satisfying, and very well-paid career. Young people, especially, enjoy the frequent and extensive travel involved.

In the case of translators, it is difficult to separate the career aspects from a consideration of the necessary training. Virtually everything that can be said about translating as a career bears directly or indirectly on the training methods and curriculum. My concern in this article is specifically with the training of native speakers of American English to translate from other languages. Relatively few Americans can be adequately trained to translate from English into other languages, although it is possible in cases where the trainee has had extended residence abroad. A slight accent or even an occasional slip

in idiomatic usage is not critical for the interpreter, but the message the translator records on the printed page must be idiomatic and natural if it is to be effective. It should be noted that loss of daily contact with the target language culture and idiom for as little as three to five years can have a very adverse effect on a translator's competence, especially for promotional translation or the translation of contemporary literature.

Shortly after the end of World War II, it appeared to many that English was rapidly acquiring the status of an international, if not a universal, language—and indeed, this is true to a great extent for science and technology, air transport, diplomacy, commercial communications, and certain other fields. Nevertheless, less than half of the world's technical literature is published in English, and it has been estimated that the world body of technical literature has increased by a factor of sixteen in the years from 1930 to 1970.[6] Today it seems obvious that no one language is likely to become *the* international language within the conceivable future. On the contrary, nationalism is on the rise, and foreign scientists who formerly published their works in English are now publishing in German, Serbo-Croatian, Hungarian, Japanese, Arabic—and even in Georgian, Ukrainian, Rumanian, and other less well-known languages.

Since the early 1960's, Germany, Japan, and other nations have achieved almost total independence from American technology and now manufacture their own products, which the U.S. must import in increasing quantity.[7] One important indicator of the increased technological competence of other nations is the growing percentage of U.S. patents issued to residents of other countries, from 17 percent in 1961 to 29 percent in 1971.[8] This has created an increasing need for technical translators. Growing nationalism throughout the world and the critical need for American business to compete in the marketplaces of the world has accelerated the expanding need for translators of promotional materials and commercial correspondence. In fact, the need for translation of every type is increasing very rapidly. Managers of some translation services report increases in business volume of up to 300 percent over the past two or three years.

Traditionally, translators have had no formal training for the vocation, and many uninformed people assume that to "know" a language is to be competent to teach it in a classroom. It is illogical, however, to expect FL teachers to translate into, or even from, a foreign language papers on such topics as "The Effect of Sulfides on the Fracture Behavior of Structural Steels," or "The Engineering Aspects of Artificial Kidneys"; indeed, relatively few native speakers of the language could converse or write on these subjects. Most people, and this includes an astonishing number of foreign language teachers, seem unable to realize that the ability to speak and understand, to read and write German, Russian, Japanese, or any other language (including English) does *not* imply a corollary ability to handle the specialized vocabularies of engineering, chemistry, nuclear physics, fluid mechanics, or even banking, law, or accounting. That is why really competent technical and commercial translators usually have all the work they can handle.

The translation of literature is also increasing, but there is as yet little opportunity for a satisfying career as a full-time literary translator. Even experienced and established literary translators are often paid relatively low rates.

It should be pointed out that the only criterion for the success of a translation is the degree to which it achieves its purpose. A translation intended to assist students of a language in identifying words that are roughly equivalent in both English and the foreign language—facing-page dual language books, for example—should be relatively literal, with only those changes that are necessary in order to have English sentences that make sense. On the other hand, a translation that attempts to demonstrate the unique style of a foreign author must do things with English comparable to what the author has done with the original language. In general, a good translation should accurately convey the informational as well as any emotional content of the original, and it should do this in language that is completely natural so that nothing about the style, structure, or vocabulary compels the reader to a conscious awareness that he is reading a translation. A translation is intended to give pleasure in reading or to convey information as effectively as possible; there is no reason why it should necessarily *read* like a translation, although naturally it should be *identified* as such, with the original title and the translator's name on the title page.

Proper identification of the translator is one of the major concerns of the P.E.N. Club and the UNESCO committees on translation, and they have made much progress in this area, as well as in their attempts to establish the right of the literary translator to collect royalties on his or her translation. No one should translate a book for publication without first studying the *Manifesto on Translation* and the sample contract for translators developed by the P.E.N. American Center.[9]

Students interested in a career in translation should be informed that the opportunities for

earning money are primarily in the field of nonliterary translation. The federal government is the largest single employer of translators in the U.S., though the number of salaried federal translators has been reduced by about fifty percent over the past five or six years, and the reduction appears to be continuing.[10]

The Civil Service classifications for translator/interpreter range from level GS-5 (starting salary, $8500 per year) through level GS-15 (starting salary, $29,818). The journeyman level is GS-7 to GS-11 ($10,520 to $15,481). Levels GS-12 to GS-15 comprise the senior translator/administrator category. Although the Translation Branch of the Department of State's Language Services Division employs about 23 translators, most of whom are at the GS-11 and GS-12 levels, and despite the fact that the CIA, NSA, and similar agencies do continue to hire a few of the best graduating foreign language majors, prospects for employment as a translator with the federal government are not very favorable at present.

The United Nations also employs translators, as distinct from interpreters. U.N. translators are required to know French as one of their three languages, and their duties consist of translating the texts of speeches, reports, documents, etc. They are also expected to write précis—actually a form of monitoring in which the translator writes a summary in one language of a speech being delivered in another.

Inexperienced translators at the U.N. start in level P-2 at $15,750, and after two years of probation they are promoted to level P-3 at $19,670 per year. There are a number of annual steps at each level; the salary for step 13 of level P-3, for example, is $27,470. Normally, however, it takes from five to ten years at the P-3 level, depending on merit, seniority, and vacancies, to advance to the revisor level, P-4, with 12 annual steps ranging from $24,220 to $32,690. There are a few level P-5 translators ($30,540 to $38,370 per year).

In addition to their base salaries, U.N. translators receive a cost-of-living adjustment that ranges from an annual $2,848 for those without dependents and $4,272 for personnel with dependents in level P-2, step 1, to $5,600 and $8,400 in level P-5, step 10.[11]

Translator salaries in the International Development Bank, Telecommunications Satellite Organization, Organization of American States, Pan-American Health Organization, and other international agencies range from $15,800 to $25,800 per year.

A growing number of American industries are beginning to maintain language staffs of one or more translators: Rockwell International, Swindell-Dressler, Otis Engineering, Honeywell, Kodak, Caterpillar and John Deere Tractor, Dow Chemical—in fact, most chemical and petroleum companies, many international engineering and construction firms, most research laboratories, all international banks, and many others. Salaries in the private sector are generally somewhat higher than those quoted for the international and national agencies, but the translator in private industry is usually required to have competence in a number of languages (five or more being quite common), and to act as escort interpreter for visiting foreign nationals and as interpreter for international telephone calls.

Despite the fact that there are large numbers of staff translators, the majority of translators are free-lance and work as they are needed, either directly for one or more clients or for translation service companies. A trend toward contracting government translation work to translation service companies is responsible, at least in part, for the drastic reduction in the number of salaried translators in the federal government, rather than any reduction in the amount of translation being done. Some of these government contracts are awarded on a low-bid basis, and competition among contractors has resulted in low rates for some government contract translation. Since many translators refuse to work for such rates, much of this work is done by relatively inexperienced people. Some of their work is good translation; much is not.

The largest single producer of translations among the government agencies is the Joint Publications Research Service (JPRS), an agency of the Central Intelligence Agency. The JPRS staff consists primarily of editors and revisors, and most of the translation work is contracted directly to free-lance translators instead of through a private translation service. The bulk of JPRS translation work is from Soviet and East European publications and consists of articles concerning the government, economy, and production capabilities of the countries involved, but the agency also provides a considerable amount of scientific and technical translation at the request of other government agencies.

Free-lance translators are usually paid on the basis of the number of words in either the source text or in the translation. Rates vary from the $10 to $14 per thousand words paid for much of the government contract work to well over $100 per thousand words. Free-lance translators working directly for the client receive between $18 and $40, and most translation services are charging the client between $40 and $80 per thousand words for English translation from common European languages.[12] Translation services naturally charge

more than they pay the translator since they have overhead expenses and must make a profit. They also frequently provide editing and typing services and may even set type, print, and produce audiovisual materials for instructional or promotional purposes. Such services are beyond the capability of the average individual free-lance translator.

Translation from English into other languages can cost astronomical sums, depending on the nature of the material and the purpose for which it is intended; much of it, however, is in the $200 to $500 range. Annual earnings of free-lance translators vary greatly, but $25,000 to $50,000 is not really unusual.

The daily production of a translator will vary with the difficulty of the text, of course, and State Department translators have been known to spend hours, or even days, on one word or phrase of an important treaty. Most translators are expected to complete bewteen 2,000 and 4,000 words per day of finished, typed translation, but some experienced translators who dictate directly for transcription by typists are capable of translating in excess of 20,000 words per day.[13] As a career, translating, like interpreting, is definitely not for everyone. A person who enjoys crossword puzzles, puns, and similar intellectual/linguistic games, and who enjoys reading about almost any subject imaginable, *probably* has the personality and latent talents of a translator.

Aside from the obvious requirement that the translator be able to read and understand the source language, the most important prerequisite is the ability to write the target language with far better fluency than the average native speaker. Whereas the native speaker or writer needs to express only his own thoughts in his own language the translator is expected to render in the target language any idea that anyone can formulate in any of the languages he translates.

Almost as important as the ability to write the target language very well is common sense. The translator must have enough intelligence to know that *if the translation does not make sense, it is wrong.* If this observation seems too obvious for comment, consider the following example of an actual translation: "This means of conveyance about which the matter concerned were long since received by those whom Kadyrov names, and the members of the commission merely remained as the last number to sign documents, that they, unfortunately did so." The so-called translator who rendered that sentence from Russian must have been either completely oblivious to what he or she was writing, or must have assumed the foreign author was writing gibberish. And what is the meaning of the following "translation": "On the strength of its fundamenticity, similar investigations have a nontransient value"? Given the context and enough time, perhaps some sense could be made of such a statement, but it is not English! In another translation the technical term "threshold value" was translated as "national value" each time it appeared, and in yet another, the element "neodymium" was given as "aluminum" throughout the entire text.[14] One translation specified a "variable speed motor" when the original text called for an "AC motor." Another contained the sentence, "The maximum heat flow at the surface of the *heat-generating* under these conditions equals approximately 1860° C." What was translated as "heat-generating" in an article on nuclear reactors was actually "fuel elements." Such translations are completely useless because they convey either misinformation or no information at all. At least when the translation is gibberish the client knows that it is unreliable. On the other hand, when the mistake is one that makes sense in the translation, such as "variable speed motor" for "AC motor," there may be nothing to warn the user that the translation is wrong.

The best translator for a specific text would be one who is an expert in the subject matter and who knows the source language well enough to know when the foreign text says something other than what the individual's expertise would lead him or her to expect it to say. This ideal translator would be capable of rendering a completely accurate translation using the specialized vocabulary common to experts in that field, and could also detect typographical errors or missing terms in equations and formulas and determine what the original manuscript *must have said* before the typesetter garbled the message. Such an expert would probably have a difficult time finding enough translation in his or her specific field to keep busy, aside from the obvious fact that earnings would probably be greater as an expert in the subject field. Most translators must compromise with this ideal by knowing as much as possible about as many things as possible, and by knowing how to find out what they do not yet know. They must be familiar with the jargon of many fields and have a superficial understanding of how things work, but they do not have to have any detailed knowledge of the field. If there was a vocation made to order for the jack-of-all-trades, it is translation.

Just as a concert pianist or a carpenter is trained to use the same fingers and hands we all use, but to use them in different ways, so the translator must be trained to use common linguistic skills and organs in ways that are not common. Instead of *con*ceiving ideas and expressing them in the same language, the translator must *re*ceive them in one language and express them in another. He or she

must be trained *not* to "think in the language," but to understand in one language and to express these thoughts in another language. Furthermore, the translator must be able to express the foreign author's thoughts in a vocabulary and style appropriate to the subject matter. These observations in no way invalidate the objective of teaching students to strive for real bilingualism by thinking in the foreign language. They merely indicate that it is difficult to train translators unless they are isolated from students who are learning the language for different purposes.

Not only must translators reorient their linguistic skills, they must also learn about the tools of their trade and how to use them. These tools are dictionaries of all kinds, encyclopedias, various types of lists and catalogs, collections of abstracts, bibliographies, and mechanical tools such as typewriters, dictating equipment, and various tools for graphics work. The computer terminal is becoming ever more important for the translator who can consult a terminology bank. In the U.S. such terminology banks are usually available only to translators in government agencies and in a few industries, but public access will probably be available before 1984. Carnegie-Mellon is currently planning such a terminology bank for public access, and the University of Montreal plans to make its "Termium" bank available to U.S. subscribers.

One of the most useful skills a translator can have is the ability to do research. Courses that acquaint him or her with the location and use of as many resource materials as possible are very helpful. Familiarity with directories of people, schools, organizations, agencies, etc., and with catalogs of products and trade names, lists of scientific and common names of chemicals, plants, animals, and insects, in addition to the reference materials mentioned above, is extremely valuable. Above all, the translator should be taught to appreciate, respect, and adore reference librarians; these people are really the translator's best friends, and often they can provide information when every other source has proved inadequate.

From the point of view of a career, the translator should acquire some degree of business acumen. Business skills are more important for translators than for carpenters because there is no union wage classification for translators. They must negotiate their wages and working conditions with each employer, sometimes for each translation. Translators are professionals, comparable to the physician or lawyer in private practice, but they are also small-businessmen.

During the past five years there has been much interest among foreign language teachers in the subject of translator training. Although the ATA has developed a set of guidelines for translator training at the college level and encourages the formal academic training of translators, the Association has no desire to see such training programs spring up indiscriminately across the U.S. There will probably never be enough demand for translators to justify training more than a few hundred per year. Furthermore, most teachers of foreign languages are simply not qualified to teach translation without training and experience as professional translators.

Knowledge of a foreign language, no matter how thorough, does not make a translator. Nor does a Ph.D. in a foreign language and its literature imply competence as a translator. Translator training requires a curriculum different from that required for developing the four foreign language skills, and the demand for translators is not sufficiently large to justify a separate curriculum in a large number of schools. Nevertheless, foreign language teachers and vocational guidance counselors should have some idea of what is involved in training translators so that they can offer sound advice to students who might be interested in careers as translators or interpreters. An overall view of a suggested curriculum is provided in the ATA guidelines for translator-training programs.[15]

Teachers and students alike are interested in which languages are most important for careers in translation. In terms of the amount of work available, the most important languages are probably Russian, German, Japanese, French, and Spanish, in approximately that order. French is the most important language for interpreters, but not for translators.[16] Chinese is likely to be in demand when détente or some other arrangement makes available to the West the Chinese technical literature of the past three or four decades. There is some demand for Arabic at present because of the petroleum situation and worldwide energy crisis, and the demand will probably continue to grow for a time since the countries of the Middle East are beginning to refuse to do business in French and are agitating for recognition of Arabic as an official U.N. language. Portuguese is growing in importance as Brazil, with half the population and half the territory of South America, develops into a world power. The relative importance of individual languages varies to some extent according to the subject matter, with one country prominent in certain fields and other countries in other fields.

In general, a translator needs one or two of the five most important languages, and at least one of the less popular languages. The more languages and the more subject-matter fields in which he or she can translate with competence, the better the translator's chances of finding either a salaried position or free-lance assignments. Since it is much

easier to learn to read a language than to learn to speak or write it, most translators add languages to their repertoire rather easily, especially languages in the same family as one they already know—other Romance or Germanic or Slavic languages, for example.

Although only a few staff translators can afford to specialize very narrowly in subject matter, every translator should have one or two broad fields with which he or she is fairly familiar, such as natural sciences, earth sciences, life sciences, engineering, business, transportation, communications, and so forth. Within these broad categories, the translator should have roughly the equivalent of an undergraduate major in at least one subject, with several courses in others, or else specially designed courses in terminology. In addition, he or she should have survey-type courses in as many other fields as possible and read everything there is time to read in the appropriate language.

Translation is a very important activity! Without translation we would know little if anything about the great contributions to our own culture that have been made by the Hebrews, Greeks, Romans, Arabs, Chinese, and many other peoples. Without translation the United States probably would never have become the world leader in science and technology for several decades. Few people are aware, for example, of how much was gained in knowledge and financial advantage from the mass of German technical literature and patents confiscated during and after World War II to say nothing of the contributions made by emigrés like Einstein, Werner von Braun, and dozens of others. Anyone involved in any aspect of multilingualism should have a tremendous pride in his or her language skills and should transmit this pride to others; perhaps then it will be possible to convince people of the material as well as the intellectual value of learning foreign languages.

There are many reasons—historical, geographical, and psychological—why Americans do not learn other languages with enthusiasm.[17] At least one has not received attention in proportion to its significance: Americans do not learn languages because they believe language skills have no market value, especially in view of the great amount of time and effort necessary to acquire them. The best things in life may be free, and Americans may indeed be eager to obtain something for nothing, but they do not respect and value anything they can obtain free of charge. Every time a polyglot uses language skills in the service of his or her monolingual brethren, every time a translation is produced or an interpretation is performed for little or no remuneration, it reinforces the idea that language skills have no monetary value. Why would any profit-oriented, practical-minded American monolingual want to expend time and effort to acquire something that cannot be sold and that can easily be dispensed with? The average American has very few occasions when even limited fluency in another language is necessary, the reasoning goes, so why learn one if there always seems to be a person available who either learned the language as a child or was naive enough to invest several years in studying it and is only too eager to perform in return for a few ooh's and aah's of admiration?

This is not to suggest that the polyglot should not assist in an emergency, or tell someone how to say "Merry Christmas" in twenty-seven languages, or even read a personal letter and tell the recipient what it says. But when a translation or interpretation is requested that will require a considerable amount of time, that will put money in someone else's pocket, or that requires a signature certifying that it is a reliable translation, the proper course is to refer the request to a competent professional translator. If the foreign language teacher *must* translate, he or she should make certain that the translation is a good one and then charge professional rates for it. Letters or documents which contain few words should be priced at an absolute minumum of $10 to $25, and translation of long texts should be at a rate of $20 to $40 per thousand words, depending on the difficulty and the degree of finishing required.

Almost every foreign language teacher gets requests for translation from the administration, from other departments, or from colleagues. No contract has ever specified that translation is one of the duties required of a foreign language teacher, however, and such work should be politely refused on the grounds that teachers are not translators and translation is not one of their duties or competencies. If there appears to be no choice but to perform the translation without pay, then at least an invoice for a respectable fee should be returned along with the translation. The invoice should state that the charge is for "professional translation services performed," but that payment of the indicated fee is waived as a donation to a nonprofit educational institution. A copy of the invoice should be retained to establish a legal claim for a legitimate tax deduction. The primary reason for this procedure, however, is to serve notice in an inoffensive way that translation is performed by professional translators for a professional fee. If everyone who is asked to do translation or interpretation would take this simple action, it would go far to correct the idea that foreign language skills are not worth the time and effort necessary to acquire them.

It is obvious that translation is no panacea for all

the maladies that afflict the foreign language teaching profession in the U.S., but it should also be obvious that translation can provide a practical option for *some* students who might continue their study of foreign languages if they knew how to apply their language competence as a valuable adjunct skill, or even as the basis for a career other than teaching. Competent translators must be trained, or they must have inherent talents and a great deal of trial-and-error experience. Unfortunately, the errors committed during the course of such experience are likely to create much ill-will for the developing translator and for the translating profession. There is a present as well as a potential need for competent translators, especially in technical and commercial translation. The need will probably never be as great as the need for people trained in most other vocations, but for certain types of students who desire a career based on their ability to use languages, it does provide an option—nothing more, but certainly nothing less.

NOTES

[1]See J. Hendry, *Your Future in Translating and Interpreting* (New York: Richard Rosen Press, 1969); and Ian Finlay, *Translating* (London: Teach Yourself Books, St. Paul's House, 1971).

[2]Patricia E. Longley, *Conference Interpreting* (London: Pitman & Sons, 1968); and Ian Finlay, *Translating*.

[3]According to a statement by Walter Keiser at the Seminar in Conference Interpreting, Monterey Institute of Foreign Studies, 24-26 October 1970. Mimeographed report of the Seminar.

[4]The American Association of Language Specialists (TAALS), 1000 Connecticut Avenue, N.W., Suite 9, Washington, D.C. 20036; American Society of Interpreters, 1520 K Street, N.W., Washington, D.C. 20005; Association Internationale des Interpretes de Conference (AIIC), 14 rue de l'Ancien Port, 1201 Geneva, Switzerland.

[5]A list of schools offering training for translators and interpreters is available from the American Translators Association (ATA), P.O. Box 129, Croton-on-Hudson, N.Y. 10520. A charge of $1.00 is made to cover costs of reproduction, handling, and postage. A packet containing the ATA Guidelines for translator-training programs, a bibliography of dictionaries and literature about translation, and the list of schools is available for $3.50.

[6]W.T. Knox, *Science*, 181 (1973), p. 415.

[7]S. Gee, "Foreign Technology and the United States Economy," *Science*, 187 (1975), p. 622.

[8]Office of Technology Assessment and Forecast, *Technology Assessment and Forecast*, Initial Publication (U.S. Department of Commerce: Washington, D.C., 1973).

[9]P.E.N. American Center, 156 Fifth Avenue, New York, N.Y. 10010.

[10]For a comprehensive review of the situation of translation and translators in the federal government, see *The Federal Linguist*, 6, No. 1-2 (Summer 1974); and *The Federal Linguist Today* (Proceedings of a Public Forum presented by the Society of Federal Linguists), Richard S. Relac, ed. (Washington, D.C.: Society of Federal Linguists, 1972).

[11]These post-adjustment figures became effective 1 April 1975, and the base salaries quoted were effective 1 January 1975. From an in-house memorandum of the U.N. acquired from a personal friend.

[12]J.F. Hendry, *Your Future in Translating and Interpreting*, p. 32.

[13]There is no publication, governmental or private, that provides information about the rates earned by free-lance translators or about the rates charged by translation agents. Most translators and virtually all translation agents consider this privileged information and it is jealously guarded as a trade secret. The information given here is based on my conversations and correspondence with approximately 200 translators and translation agents over the past five to six years.

[14]Since most technical translations are not "published," no bibliographical reference is given. Nevertheless, the examples cited are from actual paid translations.

[15]R.L. Tinsley, Jr., "Guidelines for College and University Programs in Translator Training," *ADFL Bulletin*, 4, 4 (May 1973), pp. 15-18. Also in "An Alternate Major in German," *Die Unterrichtspraxis*, 7, 1 (Spring 1974), pp. 10-17.

[16]The relative importance varies somewhat depending on the year, subject matter, etc., and different surveys (most of them based on information from *Chemical Abstracts, Biological Abstracts, Science Abstracts*, etc.) present the languages in different order. In recent years, however, Russian or German has usually been in first place, followed by the other, with Japanese, French, and Spanish bringing up the rear. In most international conferences, French is still at least one of the languages used, regardless of the others. Interpreters who know French have more opportunities to work than those who do not.

[17]Paul R. Turner, "Why Johnny Doesn't Want to Learn a Foreign Language," *Modern Language Journal*, 58, 4 (April 1974), p. 191.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Briffault, Herma. "The Plight of the Literary Translator, Especially in the U.S.A." *Babel*, 10:1 (1964), 12-14.

Citroen, I.J. "Training Technical Translators." *Babel*, 1:2 (1955), 61-64.

Cowan, Susan, *From College Girl to Working Woman*. New York: Macmillan, 1970.

Crandell, T. Ellen, ed. *Translators and Translating*. Binghamton, New York: ATA and SUNY-Binghamton Department of Comparative Literature, 1974.

DeLavergne, Mary. "Interpretation Please." *Occupational Outlook Quarterly*, 16:3 (1972), 6-9.

Exploring Careers in International Travel, Trade, and Communications. Cincinnati Public Schools 1973. ERIC ED 106 586.

Gingold, Kurt. "Translation in American Industry." *Babel*, 10:3 (1964), 114-17.

Gingold, Kurt. "A Translator's Guide to Better Translations." *Special Libraries*, 57 (1966), 643-44.

Honig, Lucille J., and Brod, Richard I. *Foreign Languages and Careers*. New York: Modern Language Association, 1974. ERIC ED 103 626.

Howder, Murray L., et al. "Academic Training of Translators: A Debatable Issue." *Federal Linguist*, 5:1-2 (1973), 2-17.

Howerton, Paul W. "Technical Translations: Their Initiation, Production, and Use." *Special Libraries*, 53 (1962), 21-25.

Jackson, Mary H. *What and How for Foreign Language Students: What Are the Career Opportunities and How to Prepare for Them*. 1974. ERIC ED 107 095.

Kirkpatrick, Jeane J., and Wellemeyer, John F. *Resurvey of Foreign Language Needs of Selected Federal Agencies*. 1961. ERIC ED 013 355.

Languages for Special Purposes. CILT Reporters and Papers 1. London: Centre for Information on Language Teaching, 1969. ERIC ED 030 104.

Lufkin, James M. "What Everybody Should Know about Translation." *Special Libraries*, 60:2 (1969), 74-81.

Nida, Eugene A. *Toward a Science of Translation*. Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1964.

Ronai, Paulo. "The Trials of a Technical Translator." *Babel*, 4:4 (1958), 210-12.

Scientific and Technical Translation and Other Aspects of the Language Problem. UNESCO, 1957.

Sykes, J. B., ed. *Technical Translator's Manual*. New York: ASLIB, Chickrell Library Publishing Co., 1971.

Tinsley, Royal L., Jr. "Documentation and the 'Invisible' Translator." *Translation News*, 5:1 (1975), 1-8.

Weis, Erich, comp. "International Bibliography on Translation and Applied Linguistics." *Babel*, 20:1 (1974), 55-59.

Wellemeyer, John F. *Survey of Personnel Policies in Relation to Foreign Language Competences*. 1960. ERIC ED 013 354.

Whitcomb, Richard O. "The Enrollment Crisis: Exploiting Our Untapped Markets." *ADFL Bulletin*, 4:2 (1972), 11-14.